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Ontario Women's Directorate

NEWS RELEASE

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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT HOSTING CONFERENCE ON FEMALE LEADERSHIP AND SPORT

Conference To Focus On How Sports Can Empower Girls And Women

TORONTO – An Ontario government sponsored conference on "Sport and the Empowerment of Females" will kick off tonight with a keynote address from Jennifer Botterill of the national women's hockey team who will be speaking about "Women in sport: Are they empowered by their involvement?".

"This conference will allow leading members of the sports community to exchange ideas on how sports can help young women develop leadership skills and self-confidence," said Sandra Pupatello, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. "By giving girls the opportunity to participate in sports, we are helping them lay some of the foundations they need to assume leadership roles in the broader community."

The conference, the first of its kind funded by the Ontario government, is being held in Toronto on September 28 and 29, 2006. It is aimed at education, health and sport professionals who are in a position to influence women and girls. The Ontario government contributed $45,000 to the University of Windsor and Leadership and Advancement for Women in Sport to deliver the conference.

"I am very pleased that the government is supporting equal opportunities for women and girls to pursue athletics and careers in sport and recreation in a safe and healthy environment," says Dr. Margery Holman, Associate Professor, University of Windsor. "This conference is helping to ensure that females are given opportunities and encouraged to exercise their leadership abilities both on and off the playing field."

In addition to Botterill, other keynote speakers include: Sandra Kirby, University of Winnipeg professor, author, and former National team athlete, speaking about "the big three" issues: gender inequity in sport; sexual harassment and abuse in sport; and homophobia and heterosexism in sport; Alan Berkowitz, researcher and writer on the role of men in creating a culture of equity in sport; and Molly Killingbeck, Canadian Sport Centre Ontario, speaking about female coaches in sport.

"Participation in sport builds girls' self confidence and self-esteem," said Minister of Health Promotion Minister Jim Watson. "Sport is empowering and those who embrace it come to embrace healthy living and healthy lifestyles."

The conference is the latest initiative by the McGuinty government to support women and recognize female leadership. Other initiatives include:

- $1.5 million for the Women In Skilled Trades (WIST) program to help women train for high-paying jobs in the skilled trades and;
- $2.7 million for Information Technology Training for Women (ITTW), a program that enables women to secure employment, further training and certification in the IT sector; and
- the "Leading Women, Building Communities" Award, the first Ontario government award that recognizes exceptional leadership of women and their contribution to improving the lives of women and girls in their

communities.

- $5 million annually for the Communities in Action Fund that supports participation in community sport and physical activity and helps remove barriers to participation for groups including: women and girls, children and youth and older adults.

More information about the conference is available at: http://www.empoweredfemales.com.

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